
Capital Budget Committee

HB 1957

Brief Description: Identifying qualified applicants and procedures within the Washington wildlife and recreation program.

Sponsors: Representatives Jacks, Warnick and Van De Wege.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes mitigation banking projects from the list of allowable uses of Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) funds in the Habitat Conservation Account and the Riparian Protection Account.
- Adds nonprofit nature conservancy organizations and associations to the list of eligible recipients of WWRP funding.
- Adds the state Conservation Commission to the list of eligible recipients of funding from the Riparian Protection Account and the Farmlands preservation account.

Hearing Date: 2/9/09

Staff: Annie Pennucci (786-7142)

Background:

The Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP), created by the 1990 Legislature, provides funds for the acquisition and development of local and state parks, water access sites, trails, critical wildlife habitat, and urban wildlife habitat. Counties, cities, ports, park and recreation districts, school districts, state agencies, and tribes are eligible to apply. Grant applications are evaluated annually; the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) submits a list of prioritized projects to the Governor and Legislature for approval. In the 2007-09 biennial capital budget, the WWRP received \$100 million in state general obligation bonds. Table 1 displays historical appropriations for the WWRP.

Table 1: The WWRP State Capital Budget Appropriations

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Biennium	Appropriation
1991-93	\$ 50,000,000
1993-95	\$ 65,000,000
1995-97	\$ 45,000,000
1997-99	\$ 45,000,000
1999-01	\$ 48,000,000
2001-03	\$ 45,000,000
2003-05	\$ 45,000,000
2005-07	\$ 50,000,000
2007-09	\$ 100,000,000

When biennial funding is less than \$40 million, half of the WWRP funding is distributed to the Habitat Conservation Account and half to the Outdoor Recreation Account. If biennial funding is more than \$40 million, a portion of the funding is distributed to the Riparian Protection Account and the Farmlands Preservation Account. Allowable uses of funds in each of the four WWRP accounts are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Allowable Uses of the WWRP Funds, by Account

WWRP Account	Habitat Conservation	Outdoor Recreation	Riparian Protection	Farmlands Preservation
Allowable Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical habitat • Natural areas • State lands restoration and enhancement • Urban wildlife habitat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local parks • State parks • State lands development and renovation • Trails • Water access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition, enhancement, or restoration of riparian habitat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition and preservation of farmlands

In the Habitat Conservation Account and the Riparian Protection Account, allowable uses of funds include mitigation banking projects. A mitigation bank means a site where habitat is created, restored, enhanced, or preserved to offset authorized project impacts to similar areas. The WWRP mitigation banking funds may not be used to supplant an obligation of a state or local agency to provide mitigation.

The state Conservation Commission provides grants and technical assistance to local conservation districts throughout Washington State.

Nonprofit nature conservancies acquire land and purchase conservation easements to preserve land that is under private ownership.

Summary of Bill:

The bill removes mitigation banking projects from the statutory list of allowable uses of the Habitat Conservation Account and the Riparian Protection Account.

The bill adds nonprofit nature conservancy organizations and associations to the list of eligible recipients of funding from the four WWRP accounts, and adds the Conservation Commission to eligible recipients of funding from the Riparian Protection Account and the Farmlands Preservation Account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 9, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.